

THE IDENTITY OF THE PANAMANIAN GENUS *DRESSLERIOPSIS* (RUBIACEAE)

In the treatment of the Rubiaceae for the Flora of Panama, Dwyer (1980) described the endemic and monospecific genus *Dressleriopsis* and erected, although invalidly, the new tribe Dressleriopsidae. The new genus, which is said to be unique among New World Rubiaceae in having 8-pyrened fruits, seemed to me to be similar to the paleotropical genus *Lasianthus* Jack. Subsequent study of some of the specimens cited by Dwyer (viz. *Mori & Kalunki 2340* and *Dwyer 9035*, both MO) confirmed that *Dressleriopsis* Dwyer is synonymous with *Lasianthus* Jack.

Lasianthus has its major centers of distribution in Asia (about 120 species) and Africa (about 20 species), but it has long been known that one species occurs in Cuba (Schumann, 1891:121).

Dressleriopsis panamensis shows all the characteristics of *Lasianthus* emphasized by Petit (1964:22; see also Denys, 1981): axillary inflorescences, fruits (Fig. 2) with many pyrenes opening by a basal lid, seeds with weak and oily endosperm, and large embryos. Because of the fruit and seed characters, Petit proposed transferring *Lasianthus* from the Psathureae to the Morindeae.

The following new combination is necessary:

Lasianthus panamensis (Dwyer) Robbrecht, comb. nov. *Dressleriopsis panamensis* Dwyer, Ann. Missouri Bot. Gard. 67:153. 1980. TYPE: Panama, *Dressler 3560* (MO, holotype, m.v.).

Lasianthus panamensis resembles the group of Asiatic species in which dense hairiness of the leaf-blade is found in conjunction with an asymmetrical base, such as in *L. attenuatus* Jack, *L. copelandii* Elm., *L. luzonensis* Elm., *L. rhinocerotis* Bl., and *L. wallichii* Wight, but within this group, *L. panamensis* is unique in being a low, mostly single-stemmed woody plant usually attaining a height of about half a meter and sometimes forming horizontal runners. This life-form, typical of the rain forest floor, is common in other groups of *Lasianthus* (e.g. the African *L. batangensis* K. Schum.), in the related genus *Trichostachys*

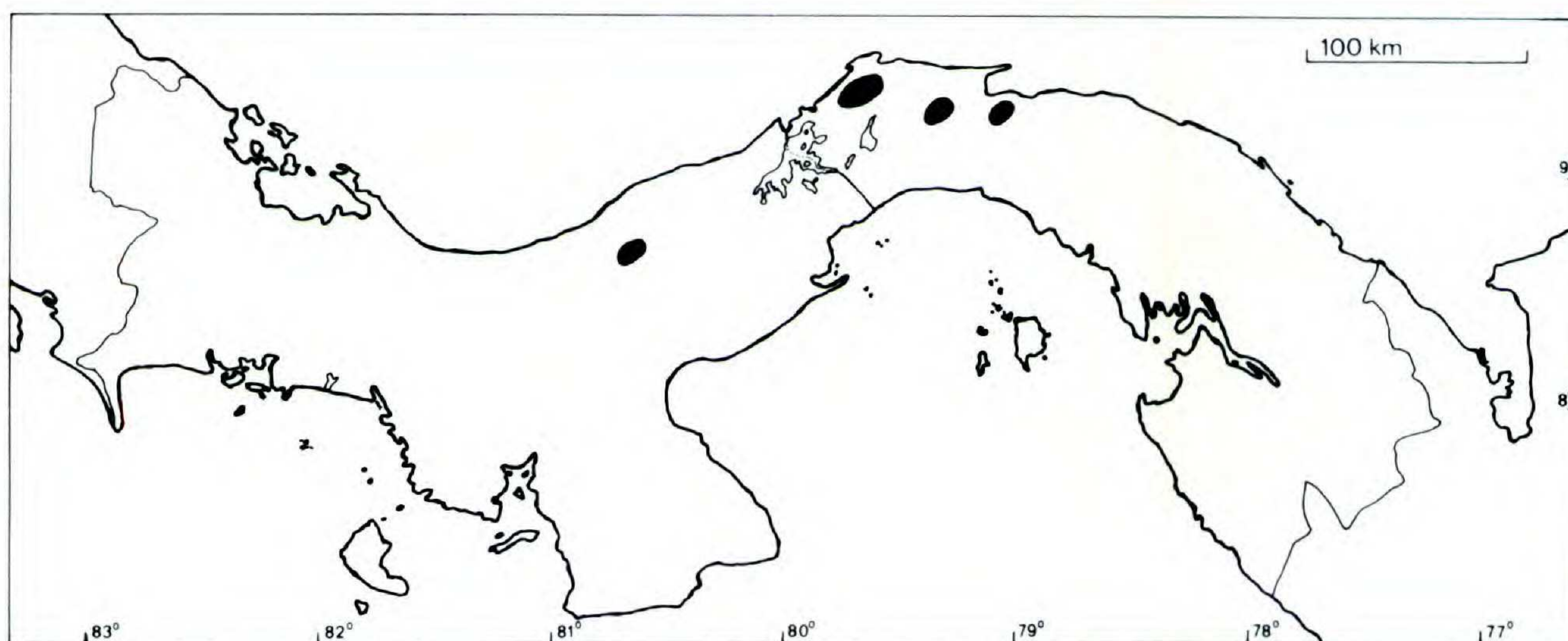


FIGURE 1. Known distribution of *Lasianthus panamensis* (Dwyer) Robbrecht.

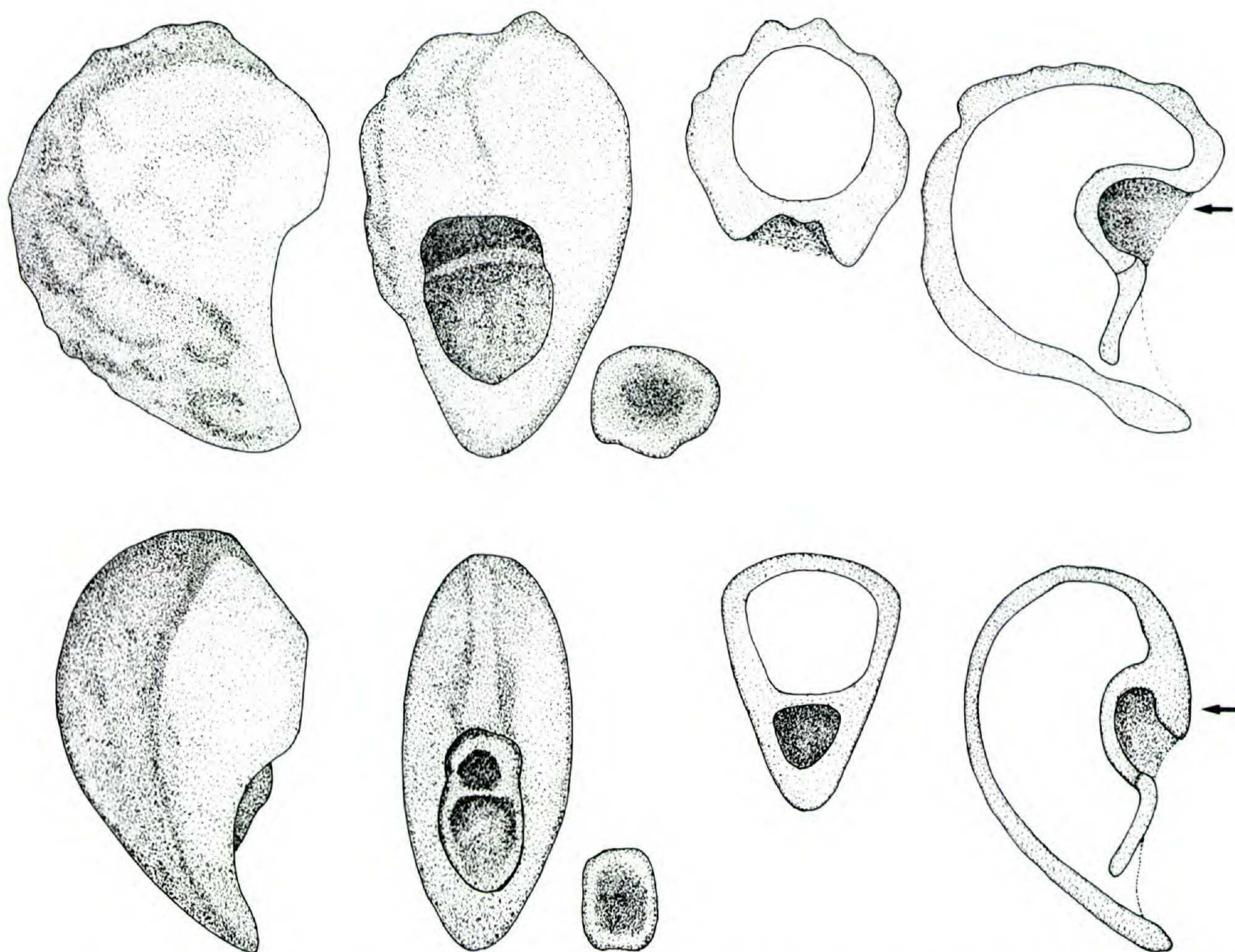


FIGURE 2. Pyrenes of *Lasianthus lanceolatus* (Griseb.) Wright ex Hook. (above; C. Wright 253, BR) and *Lasianthus panamensis* (Dwyer) Robbrecht (beneath; Mori & Kallunki 2340, MO). From left to right: lateral view, adaxial view (with basal lid removed), cross section (at level indicated in longitudinal section) and longitudinal section. All $\times 11$.

and in many elements of the related tribe Psathureae. The formation of runners, which is very apparent in the recent collection from the province of Coclé (*Dressler* 6017), was described by Dwyer as the occurrence of "a pair of slender rigid opposite branches."

Lasianthus panamensis is certainly a distinct taxon, and there seems to be no doubt about its nativeness in Panama. It occurs in undisturbed forests and is frequent in at least three different areas with an extension of about 80 km from east to west in the part of Panama east of the Canal Zone (*Dressler*, personal communication). After the publication of *Dressleriopsis*, the taxon was also discovered about 100 km west of the Canal Zone: Panama, province of Coclé, W of Cano Sucio (trail to Chorro de Tife), ca. 13 km NNW of El Copé, very wet forest, 4 July 1981, R. L. *Dressler* 6017 (BR). The species may extend as far west as Veraguas, or even into Bocas del Toro or Costa Rica (Fig. 1).

The other Neotropical *Lasianthus* does not occur on the Central American continent but is limited to the West Indies; its correct citation should be *L. lanceolatus* (Griseb.) Wright ex Hook. in Benth. & Hook., Gen. Pl. 2:129 (1873), and not *L. lanceolatus* (Griseb.) Urb. as is usually given (e.g. Alain, 1962). Hook-

er, although not formally, clearly proposes the transfer of *Hoffmannia lanceolata* to *Lasianthus* and refers to Wright for the idea. The differences between *L. panamensis* and *L. lanceolatus* are summarized in the following key:

- Shrub up to 4 m tall without horizontal runners; leaf-blades 6–10 cm long and 2–3.5 cm wide, almost completely glabrous, with cuneate base symmetrical; pyrenes with a rough or grooved abaxial side. ----- *L. lanceolatus*
 Low, mostly single-stemmed, woody plants, sometimes forming horizontal runners; leaf-blades up to 23 cm long and 9 cm wide, with a very apparent hairiness, with rounded base often asymmetrical; pyrenes with a smooth abaxial side. ----- *L. panamensis*

Pending a modern study of *Lasianthus*, the species discussed here can only be compared with Hooker's classification of the genus (1880) (taken over by Schumann, 1891:121). *Lasianthus lanceolatus* undoubtedly belongs to the series *Nudiflorae*. *Lasianthus panamensis* and the related Asiatic species mentioned above are harder to place and more or less agree with the series *Bracteatae*. In any event, the two Neotropical representatives of the genus *Lasianthus* are not closely related and seem to be the results of two separate cases of long distance dispersal.

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